New Political Science

The beauty and the beast: Foucault's aesthetic of existence 'overtakes' power

Koula Mellos [a]

[a] Professor of Political Science ,
University of Ottawa
Published online: 13 Dec 2007.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Koula Mellos

The Beauty and the Beast: Foucault's aesthetic of existence 'overtakes' power

A scholarly interest in Michel Foucault's notion of subject is beginning to emerge alongside the long standing interest in his work on power (Bodei 1986; Jambet 1989; Laforest 1989). Power is, of course, a critical component of the entire corpus of his work which spans across four decades and has sustained interest as a new, potentially more fruitful approach to analyses of social relations. The notion that power is relational, dynamic, intentional, diffuse, corporal, pervasive and agonistic is implicitly present in the earlier writings of *Folie et déraison* (1961), *Naissance de la clinique* (1963), but highlighted in *Surveiller et punir* (1975), *La volonté de savoir* (1976) and various lectures, interviews and articles of the '70s and '80s. As critical as the genealogy of power is to Foucault's thought, it withdraws into the background of his critical reflection in favour of an ethic of self-constitution which he qualifies as an aesthetic ethic of existence and which he explores in the last of his writings, *L'usage des plaisirs* (1984b) and *Le souci de soi* (1984c), by going back to antiquity. In these late writings, there is a replacement of the problematic of power with that of aesthetics of existence and this represents a theoretical shift, which may be likened to a Kuhnian paradigmatic change, from a paradigm of subjugation to one of self-constitution. An important constituent element of each paradigm is the principle of freedom and of subjectivity but the notion of subject that emerges in the genealogy of power is radically different, I shall argue, from the subject of the aesthetic of existence. Indeed, subsequent to the archaeological phase of Foucault's work on discursive practices from which all traces of subjectivity are eliminated, the subject is reintroduced in two distinct senses: the subject of resistance and the subject of self-constitution.[1] If an ethic of liberty informs Foucault's genealogy of power, it also provides the condition for superseding the subjugation paradigm of the genealogy of power by the self-constitution paradigm of the aesthetic of existence. In my thesis, the transition from a subject of resistance to a subject of self-constitution is a logical severance but it is also a normative continuity. In other words, power determinism and the logic of subjugation necessarily confines critical, freedom-

115

seeking activity to resisting domination but the ethic of liberty underlying this activity paves the way for a departure from the logic of power determinism to a logic of self-determination.

Paradigm versus *épistémè*

Before examining the specificity of the paradigm of subjugation and of the paradigm of self-constitution and the sense in which the former can only accommodate a notion of subject as resistance and reaction and the latter a notion of subject as self-constitution, I should like to propose a definition of paradigm as theoretical framework based on a set of metaphysical assumptions and comprising logical and methodological rules which designate objects of analysis, regulate the admissibility of questions and determine the validity of responses. This is a Kuhnian definition without being Kuhn's own definition. In working out a theory of paradigm formation in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970), Kuhn provides many definitions each of which accentuates a particular component of paradigm.[2]   In the introduction he proposes paradigm as a theoretical and mobile structure comprising sociological, social psychological, logical and epistemological dimensions.[3]   His thesis of the "structure of scientific revolutions" refers simultaneously to the internal coherence of a given science including the mechanisms of logical exclusiveness, its limits as regards admissible problematics and explanation, its logical and epistemological opposition to alternative science and to the power struggle between advocates of opposing sciences.

Foucault, himself, focuses on internal factors of paradigm formation in *Les mots et les choses* (1966) and in *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969). He does not propose the term "paradigm" but rather "discursive formation" or *épistémè* to designate a unity of statements defining a theoretical discipline and governed by rules of discursive practice which display an internal coherence. Foucault's archaeological approach is one of determining conditions of existence of a discursive formation which are equated with the actual practices of the scientific community at a given historical period including the rules of operation governing meaning, admissibility of theoretical problems and validity of solutions. His notion of practices stands in opposition to the anthropocentric concept of subjectivity and related notions of beliefs, intentions and desires of scientists - present in the Kuhnian paradigm - and conveys a structuralist sense of interrelation as an expression of coherence.

Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) have pointed out how Foucault's notion of discursive formation is posed as a positivistic construct in the sense of description of concrete practices with rules of coherence and internal unity

but without metaphysical assumptions. On this point alone the Kuhnian *notion of paradigm* diverges from the Foucaultian notion of discursive formation even though both are constructs for theorizing scholarly practices. In regards theoretical unity, both paradigm and *épistémè* are applicable to a single corpus of thought for assessing internal coherence and for detecting changes in theoretical direction, the level at which changes occur and whether they are sufficient to replace one paradigm by another. To explore my thesis of paradigmatic change in Foucault I appeal to the Kuhnian notion because it includes a metaphysical level where an ethic of liberty operates making the transition of paradigms intelligible. The change is one from a logic of subjugation, which situates subjectivity in adversarial social relations and problematizes it as an effect of power, to a logic of self-determination which situates subjectivity in relation to itself and problematizes the self in terms of aesthetic activity.

Positive versus negative power

Foucault's genealogy of power introduces the radically new notion of positive power which, in Foucault's own account of his work, is a definite landmark if not necessarily a theoretical turning point. In an interview with Lucette Finas (Foucault 1980a) he acknowledges the critical role of power in his work but classifies his thinking into two phases on the basis of positive and negative power with the writing, *L'ordre du discours* (1971), as the work of transition. Prior to this writing a juridical, negative sense of power marked his analyses and subsequent to it, including *Surveiller et punir* (1975) and *La volonté de savoir* (1976) a broader, positive notion of power guided his thought. Foucault poses this distinction as a significant one for his own work in general as well as for various aspects of it in particular. According to my thesis, positive power emerges in a paradigm of subjugation whose logic is one of power determinism but whose critical thrust comes from a metaphysical ethic of liberty. The ethic of liberty provides a constant push away from subjugation while the logic of power determinism prevents an escape. This dialectic ultimately leads to a replacement of a logic of power determinism by a logic of self-constitution with the ethic of liberty paving the way for this logical transition. To argue this thesis, I should first like to examine the complex new notion of positive power as Foucault's tool of analysis of contemporary society.

Positive power, for Foucault, is far broader, stronger, more versatile and apt to capture the operation of social dynamics than a negative, juridical conception of power. The latter is wholly tied to interdiction, censorship, prohibition. It has the function of prevention of certain activities from occurring and certain objects from being produced and hence of punishing in

the face of violation. Foucault regards this as the prevalent conception of power of such disparate theories of society as liberal, Marxist and critical theory.

But the effects of power are not only ones of deterrence, hence, of prevention but of incitation and production. Not only are actions and objects prevented from happening but others are actually produced including objects of pleasure and desire. It is this positivity which Foucault associates with the pervasiveness and entrenchment of power. "What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse"(1980a, 119).

With this notion, Foucault explores the dynamics of power highlighting strategic exercise as opposed to symbolic representation with which he challenges the idea of power as a resource to be appropriated and retained as property. He proposes that the exercise of power be - in his words - "conceived not as a property, but as a strategy, that its effects of domination [be] attributed not to 'appropriation', but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings" (1977a, 26). From strategic interaction Foucault derives an intentionality as distinct from subjectivity as free positing and achieving of objectives. Intentionality operates in the constraint of opposing strategies - each attempting to outwit the other - and the constraint of structure from which strategies are waged. In this way, Foucault dissociates intentionality from subjectivity while making subjectivity itself the effect of power. Indeed, the individual is but an effect of power. "[I]t is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals" (1977a, 98).

Foucault finds in power an agility, resilience and adaptability which make the transition from one form of power to another a mere change of techniques and strategies. Modern secular power replaces religious principles of pastoral power by scientific principles making the human body its immediate object. This corporality of modern power or biopower underlies the countless insights of the monumental study of *Surveiller et punir* (1975). The body is "also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (1977a, 25). By means of the body, power seeks effects of conformity consistent with its own reproduction. It proceeds by imprinting its force on the body in order to mold the body into an extension of its own image. This political economy of the body does not focus narrowly on the organic, physical body but on the mind as well. Power to elicit specific effects is invested in this whole. These

effects are, of course, effects of discipline by which the body is trained and molded to work in the factory, to fight in the army, to study in school, to be nursed in the hospital and so on.

If we read a functionalist neutrality in this conception of power as one critic does, (Honneth 1985) we miss the normative thrust of Foucault's analysis. Rainer Rochlitz is correct in his assessment that "it [the analysis] has a coldness and a neutrality in appearance only; it is a dramatic and ironic functionalism with a sardonic style as its normative base of critique" (1989, 296, my translation). Foucault's is not a detached analysis of power and of its modalities of operation as so many mechanisms, techniques and strategies for its own reproduction. Power is posed not as a neutral process but as an object of critique in a problematic of subjugation. From the perspective of this problematic, power animates a normalization process of social integration in which the individual is prescribed his or her identity, and shows itself to be oppressive and tyrannical.

The paradigm of subjugation: positive power and the subject of resistance:

In "The Subject and Power" published as the "Afterward" in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* by Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (1982) and in *L'usage des plaisirs* (1984b), Foucault qualifies his work on power as a means to understanding the formation of subjects. "[W]hat has been the goal of my work during the last twenty years (...) has not been to analyze the phenomena of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective instead has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (1982, 208). In this definition of theoretical objective and in the actual execution of it in *Surveiller et punir* (1975) and in *La volonté de savoir* (1976), the individual is constituted as subject by power. *Surveiller et punir* focuses on a demonstration of how varied strategies operate on the body to elicit behaviour and attitude consistent with prescribed norms and how the body is made a receptacle of external forces. Neither does it abstain, from expressing a negative judgment on power processes and their effects. Such a statement as "thanks to the techniques of surveillance, the 'physics' of power, the hold over the body, operate according to the laws of optics and mechanics, according to a whole play of spaces, lines, screens, beams, degrees and without recourse, in principle at least, to excess, force or violence" (1977a, 177), is more than a descriptive account of the way power produces the means of action of the individual and the space in which he or she acts. It is a lament of reification but without the Lukacsian optimism of transcending it.[4]

To account for Foucault's critical posture toward power we must look for a normative point of reference in terms of which power is not simply a conditioning mechanism but constraining and oppressive as well. This normative reference point is freedom. Peter Dews correctly detects an implicit anthropological element in Foucaultian power which strives toward liberation. "If the concept of power is to have any critical philosophical import, there must be *some* principle, force or entity which power 'crushes' or 'subdues', and whose release from this repression is considered desirable. A *purely* positive account of power would no longer be an account of power at all, but simply of the constitutive operation of the social systems" (1987, 162). Charles Taylor goes further to uncover a principle of truth in addition to a principle of liberation and sees the former the condition of the latter. "The Foucaultian notion of power not only requires for its sense the correlative notions of truth and liberation, but even the standard link between them, which makes truth the condition of liberation" (1986, 93). At least a principle of freedom underlies Foucault's analysis of power casting it in a logic of domination and subjugation. If it is not explicit in Foucault's pronouncements, it is implicit in their critical tone and coherence. In Kuhnian terms, it emerges on a metaphysical level but affects the logical level by lending it systematicity and coherence. The question for us is whether freedom withstands the onslaught of power by opening the way out of power determinism or whether it simply provides the normative vantage point for critique?

In Foucault's genealogy of power is the notion of agonism as that quality which produces the conditions of its own resistance. Foucault's first explicit qualification of power as agonistic appears in his 1982 article, "The Subject and Power", but the sense of it is present in the much earlier writing, "Nietzsche, généalogie, histoire" (1971b) in which his Nietzschean inspiration first clearly emerges. The agonism of power breeds resistance while seeking conformity and this is captured in the Nietzschean notion of interstice. It is the site of struggle between opponents. Power subjugates but subjection, nevertheless, dares stand up in defiance shedding its subordinate role and challenging the network of domination. Paraphrasing Nietzsche approvingly, Foucault contends that "only a single drama is ever staged in this [interstice] "non-place," the endless repeated play of domination" (1977c, 150). It is in the interstice that forces of resistance enter in combat and struggle and such interstice emerges from the exercise of power.

Besides conveying a sense of struggle between forces of domination and forces of resistance, the Nietzschean notion of interstice implies that the capacity of power to subjugate is less than absolute. If power breeds resistance, its efforts to subjugate can never yield total compliance. A field

of freedom emerges in the actual exercise of power. The interstice is such a field. *The act of resistance to power in the interstice is an act of freedom.*

In the later article, "The Subject and Power", Foucault poses the notion of freedom by explicitly theorizing it in relation to power. "At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom" (1982, 221-222). He specifies that "rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an "agonism" - of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation" (1982, 222).This idea of permanent provocation paints a picture of social interaction as being strategic and disclaims the notion of systemic structure of domination with the dominators on one side and the dominated on the other. "There is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations and serving as a general matrix - no such duality extending from the top down" (1979, 94). When Foucault claims that "power comes from below" (1979, 94) he is not only making it the generalized mediation of social interaction and opening the way for resistance but affirming freedom.

But such a freedom is not a Hegelian or Marxist freedom sustaining a dialectical relation with all that is exterior to itself and seeking a reconciliation with the opposite exterior. It is not a teleologically active subjectivity striving to overcome power and ultimately reconciling with power. This freedom is constituted in and *contained* by power. When Foucault declares that "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" (1982, 221), he is associating freedom with power in a way that accords power determinate properties. The subject has freedom to react to power but not to negate it. It is a freedom of resistance, not a freedom of avoidance, withdrawal, rejection or self-constitution.

Foucault's association of power with knowledge is not inconsistent with power determinism. If power is internally related to knowledge and knowledge to power in the Foucaultian thesis of power/knowledge articulation, knowledge is in the service of power and power feeds on the arsenal of knowledge. The premise of truth as the highest universal principle - particularly in the modern human sciences - is, itself, the effect of power justifying - in turn - strategic power of any magnitude in pursuit of such truth. For Foucault, the objectifying procedures of modern sciences are simply power in action. "The carceral network constituted one of the armatures of this power-knowledge that has made the human sciences historically possible. Knowable man (soul, individuality, consciousness, conduct, whatever it is called) is the object-effect of this analytical investment, of this domination-observation" (1977a, 305). This contention is a claim that nothing is sacred;

nothing escapes the clutches of power. It permeates even the core of knowledge replacing the knowledge objectivity thesis of the philosophy of science. Power penetrates the body and the mind molding and fashioning them in specific ways and with determinate effects. Foucault's contention that "the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it" (1977a, 25), is an additional denunciation of power rather than an expression of a defeatist attitude - as critics argue necessarily follows from the thesis of power determinism (Habermas 1987a, 1987b). Such a notion reaffirms the necessity of resistance.

In the agonal relationship, power does not lose a part of itself in the production of a subject of resistance. Foucault's productive, positive power is quantitatively variable, expanding rather than being redistributed. It is not a holistic concept as it is in game theory where one's loss is the other's gain in zero sum games. On the contrary, power expands for those who exercise it as well as for those over whom it is exercised. It may expand at a greater rate on the side of domination than on the side of subjugation but this is a question of efficiency of strategy and not of an internal invariable law of dynamics. In Foucault's perspective, power is not an epistemological but a political notion. It grows not only as a force of domination but as a force of resistance.

If our account of Foucault's conception of power is correct, it poses subject as a constituent element of itself. It is a political subject in the sense that its constituent relationship is not one to itself as self-constitutive but a relationship to others. The subject of resistance fights power with power seeking to affect the conduct of the adversary. Within this framework there is the possibility of reversal of the relation of domination but not the possibility of transformation of this relation to one of equality.

While Foucaultian power is ontological, power determinism is not a device of predicting the outcome of struggle between forces of domination and forces of resistance. For the possibility of reversal of relations of domination is inscribed in the very dynamic of power. But it is only a possibility without any of the necessity of overcoming subjugation of the Lukacsian model of class struggle and communal liberation. Rather, there is the implication that in the combat between adversaries - domination and subjugation - the appropriateness of opposing tactics is determined by the better strategy which - for Foucault - is more than mere instrument for obtaining a given end. Because the objective is social in the sense of affecting the action of alter as an opponent, strategy is also anticipation of adversarial action. In the reciprocal anticipation of conflict, strategy is a search for means to control the opponent partly by craftily frustrating the opponent's expectations of my behavior - catching him or her unawares, as it

were - and preventing him or her from controlling me.⁶ Foucault's definition
captures three distinct elements of strategic action. *"[S]trategy* (...)
designate[s] the means employed to attain a certain end, (...) the manner in
which a partner in a certain game acts with regard to what he thinks should
be the action of the others and what he considers the others think to be his
own, (...) the procedures used in a situation of confrontation to deprive the
opponent of his means of combat and to reduce him to giving up the
struggle" (1982, 224). From this, we cannot assume that an inequality of
material resources such as wealth or privilege alone sustains the relation of
domination. Shrewdness and astuteness would appear to be critical in open-
ing the possibility for reversals.

Nevertheless, Foucault's theorization is not an abstract phenomenologi-
cal account of power. Social structure provides the context and is also a
determinant of strategy. From this political perspective, a reversal of domi-
nation may be a less likely possibility. In a social structure of dramatic
inequality of technology of power, it would be difficult to anticipate a
strategic advantage of the side of subjugation. For Foucault, resistance
emerges as a complex of multiple lines of combat, each line being of specific
aim and limited scope and raising to the fore individually and separately
issues of domination in a particular context and specific situation. It is - in
this Foucaultian decentralized struggle - a fragmented complex of resis-
tance. Here, there is no singular agent engaged in the labor of integrating
specific lines of conflict into a general force with a comprehensive project of
societal renewal in confrontation with dominant power. As localisation is
fragmentation, the power of resistance is vulnerable in relation to the
adversarial dominant power.

If opposition to domination normally proceeds in a specific field and as
an autonomous force, it is diffuse in relation to the strategies of domination
and for this reason may be *minimally threatening.* From the perspective of
the established rituals and technology of dominant power, local and specific
protest may be manageable by a number of concessionary strategies of little
cost to the complex power apparatus, the "dispositif" of power. However
extensive the concessions, their effect may be one of reform with a further
effect of deflating and additionally containing resistance.

The dialectical element of the notion of agonality of power does imply,
however, that absolute predictability is impossible not only in theory but in
practice. Where local resistance is multiple, simultaneous and sustained,
fragmentation may have the effect of *weakening* rather than *strengthening*
the dominant technology of power. How combat progresses, how strong
opposing forces become in relation to one another, what change emerges
from a clash of forces are all, of course, questions raised by the

unpredictability of outcome in the struggle between domination and subjugation.

Reversal of domination on the level of interaction and the level of social structure - however improbable or likely - does not overcome power but simply reproduces it. In the notion of agonalıty the constant aversion and attraction to power never resolves itself in liberation and communal harmony. It is ontological. But society coheres since power is not solely a factor of division, prohibition, deprival and punishment but of integration, permission and reward.

Rainer Rochlitz clearly sees the implications of power determinism. The question "what can be said about the oppressed who seize power?" can only be answered by "there is no guarantee that this new power would not be, in its turn, repressive" (1989, 297-298, my translation). This determinist dynamic leads to, in the words of Sheldon Wolin, "a corporatized world with no exits" (1988, 177). A society of minorities of relatively equal and hence balanced power, a pluralist Millian society of minorities without the majority and its dominant technology of power is, perhaps, the best that can be hoped for in Foucault's critical paradigm of subjugation. It acts as an element of resistance to a power determinism that tends toward dominant power fatalism.

Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut interpret the genealogy of power as containing a subject of transformation (1985). They read Foucault as saying that modern secular power is able to produce normalizing and standardizing effects while allowing a variation of normative models of behavior and that in this individualization process as a tolerable effect of power is the potential for assertion, escape and liberation. "Individualization becomes, therefore, a form of subjectivation - a particularly subtle aspect of the process of subjugation. As a result, and in order to counteract this process, concludes Foucault, it is important not so much to liberate the individual from the state and its institutions as it is to liberate ourselves from the state and the forms of individualization connected with it" (p. 159, my translation.) It is in this conclusion which they see the possibility of "reading into the last of Foucault's writings a project of reactivation of subjectivity" as - citing Foucault - "new forms of relationship to the self" (p. 159, my translation).

If a power determinism underlies Foucault's analytic of power making his social critique so incisive, it is doubtful that it can accommodate subjectivity as a relation to the self. Power is the opposite of the relation to the self; it is a conflictual relation to others. Neither does the dialectic of subjugation and of resistance, in terms of which power is posed, resolve itself in a liberating relation to the self. Liberation is limited to defiance to comply with the standardizing norms. And yet, how can we explain Luc Ferry's and

Alain Renaut's correct observation that Foucault's later writing displays a "project (...) of subjectivity" as a relation to the self? Paradigmatic disconti- nuity is the plausible answer. The principle of liberty underlying Foucault's notion of power provides the thrust for critique and even makes room for resistance but ultimately remains contained and, as such, frustrated by the power determinist logic. Expanding into self-constitutive liberty implies the abandonment of the paradigm of subjugation and its replacement by a para- digm of self-constitution.

The paradigm of self-constitution

With the focus on self-constitution there is more than a change of emphasis from subjugation to liberation; there is a change of logic. The postulate of anthropological aversion and attraction to power is dropped in favor of a postulate of free subjectivity. In *L'usage des plaisirs* (1984b), *Le souci de soi* (1984c), and in such articles and interviews as "What is Enlight- enment?" (1984a), "On the Genealogy of Ethics" (1983), we find a new and radically independent subject.

With the paradigm of self-constitution Foucault does not appeal to modern philosophy which he dispels so forcefully in *Les mots et les choses.* He does not embrace the notion of universal truth as a principle of self- constitution. The self does not fashion itself by reference to an internal essence in a process of externalization and objectification of this ideal. Rather, Foucault casts the activity of self-constitution in an aesthetic mold. Aesthetic activity is, for the new Foucault, autonomy. He bemoans "the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?" (1983, 236). In this activity, the ultimate judge of aesthet- ics is the self and not an external universal truth nor propriety.

It is to antiquity that Foucault looks for inspiration to develop his notion of aesthetic activity as one of self-constitution. He selects mastery and control of oneself as attractive principles of self-conduct. He finds these in Platonism and especially stoicism. Stoicist self-conduct is a "prohi- bition code" but what appeals to Foucault about it is the stoicist conversion of questions of conduct to "problems of personal choice" (1983, 230), and "the development of an art of existence that revolves around the question of the self" (1988, 238). Indeed, for Foucault, the moral, philosophical and medical conceptions and practices of antiquity "derive from a profoundly altered ethics and from a different way of constituting oneself as the ethical subject of one's (...) behavior" (1988, 240). Moral questions are linked to

the care of the self, "le souci de soi," the *"epimeleia heautou* ." The caring of oneself is an expression of autonomy, an *"epistrophe eis heauton,"* and not a vehicle of control by externally imposed rules of conduct. "Through the exercises of abstinence and control that constitute the required *askesis*, the place allotted to self-knowledge becomes more important. The task of testing oneself, examining oneself, monitoring oneself in a series of clearly defined exercises, makes the question of truth — the truth concerning what one is, what one does and what one is capable of doing — central to the formation of the ethical subject" (1988, 68).

Some classical scholars regard Foucault's reading of Greek and Roman thought to be mistaken. For Pierre Hadot, whose study, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (1981) is integrated into Foucault's elaboration, Foucault disregarded the classical association of the ethic of aesthetics with a universal reason. "The exercises of the stoics aimed, in fact, at overcoming the self, of thinking and acting in unison with universal reason. The three exercises described by Marcus Aurelius (VII,54; IX,6; VIII,7), following Epictetus, are, in this sense, very significant: judging in an objective way in accord with internal reason, acting in accord with the reason common to all men, accepting the destiny which cosmic reason imposes upon us" (1989, 263 , my translation).

If Hadot is right about aesthetic activity appealing to universal reason in classical thought, its misrepresentation by Foucault is very instructive. His reading of antiquity is motivated by his postulate of free subjectivity materialized in the activity of aesthetic expression. In this sense, he may be excused for not contributing, as do Pierre Hadot and others, to a refinement of our understanding of antiquity. Foucault seeks an autonomy which cannot be found in antiquity. He proposes neither a renaissance of antiquity nor an affirmation of modernity for he rejects a universal form as the regulative principle of self-constitution. Autonomy as aesthetic self-constitution takes something from both. It borrows from the ancients the element of "personal choice" but its *activism* can come only from the moderns. The self as activity and creativity is a modern notion but Foucault's self is modern only in its activism. It is freed from modern universality which he regards solely as externally imposed prohibition.

Such an individual, I believe, emerges from Foucault's archaeologically and genealogically constructed notion of creativity. If Foucault does not offer a universal standard to the self, which, indeed, he must reject as constraining and repressive and, in this regard, he never abandons the spirit of the critique of modernity he developed in *Les mots et les choses* (1966), neither is he oblivious to the problems of situating the activity of self-constitution in a social and historical vacuum. He attempts to avoid this

difficulty by posing archaeologically and genealogically constructed histori-
cal experience as raw material from which to choose, to combine, to modify,
to be inspired by or to categorically reject in the activity of self-constitution.
This is the sense of Foucault's notion of creative critique as the relation
between the self and history in the following rather lengthy passage.

> [C]riticism is no longer going to be practised in search for formal structures with
> universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us
> to constitute ourselves and to recognise ourselves as subject of what we are doing,
> thinking, saying. In that sense, this criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not
> that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeo-
> logical in its method. Archaeological ... in the sense that ... it will seek to treat the
> instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical
> events ... genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we
> are what it is possible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the
> contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing,
> or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphys-
> ics that has finally become a science (...) it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and
> wide as possible to the undefined work of freedom (1984a, 45-46).

In the activity of selection Foucault reverses the structural relationship
between action and structure which marks his previous thinking where
action is an effect of structure. Now, the activity of self-constitution is
informed by history and its structures but is not determined by them. The
universalism of an Hegelian idealist historical ontology or of a Lukacsian
historical materialist ontology is replaced by a universal particularism as a
radical autonomy of aesthetic self-formation. Aesthetic judgment is the
subjective judgment of the self. It is self-referential in the sense that the
ultimate standard for aesthetic conduct or an aesthetic act is provided by the
self not by virtue of an internal essence nor by virtue of the quality of the act
in itself but by virtue of the act in relation to the self in its autonomy. It is the
act of freedom of the self to dare to be different. The individual retains from
history that which pleases him or her or that which inspires the construction
of something pleasing to him or to her.

If Foucault adopts power determinism in his work on the analytic of
power, he now retains subjective autonomy in a form that is far more radical
than anything proposed by modernity. The archaeological and genealogical
'raw material' of history is not regarded as constraining for what the self
actually does with past history and how he or she constructs his or her
personal history is a matter of personal choice and subjective autonomy. The
aesthetically self-constituting subject knows none of the metaphysical, epis-
temological and ontological structures of the modern subject. It does not
incorporate a universal reason and is not in search of universal truth.

This unburdened, lighter subject may appear utopic to us. If its self-constituting activity is purely self-referential and therefore lacking any objective mediation, the aesthetic self may simply be a solitary self which, for all its radical freedom, be but confined to its own solipsistic world. Such a notion makes little philosophical sense and we join Charles Taylor (1986) in rejecting the possibility of an activity of choosing and even creating without acknowledging a prior social identity in terms of which selection and judgment can be made. If, however, we situate self-constituting activity in a context of social oppression, it becomes a political means of opposition in terms other than that which the forces of domination allow. Resistance, here, is a qualitatively different activity from that which is implied by the paradigm of subjugation. In this latter, the activity of opposition is determined by power in that, as we saw, the individual does not escape the forces of normalization and homogenization but is an effect of them. Furthermore, this activity of resistance is strategically motivated to prevail over the adversary rather than to escape this conflictual interaction of mutual struggle for control. In constituting itself, the aesthetic subject is radically independent and hence wholly resistant to any external forces aiming to contain this self-expression. This self-constituting activity acquires a political force and becomes a political device of resistance of those forces which militate against its freedom of expression.

In this reading of Foucault, the new subject that emerges in the paradigm of self-constitution is a radical subject but not a politically complacent one. The new subject does not imply that all the political struggles for freedom have been fought and won nor that victory is immanent nor, perhaps, even possible. The will to struggle, which Leslie Paul Thiele (1990) regards as being Foucault's dominant distinguishing mark in his relation to Nietzsche, is entirely coherent with the self-constituting subject. A will to struggle is not a will to power as domination but a will to struggle for self-expression and self-constitution. To the extent that social conditions deny the individual the freedom of self-constitution, political struggle against the enormous network of disciplinary power is critical. Indeed, it is the condition for the possibility of self-constitution.

Whether or not aesthetic self-constitution has solipsistic implications, it provides the normative basis - lacking in the power determinist logic of the paradigm of subjugation - for resistance to that which denies or otherwise restricts this expression. As a political statement, it is a critical theory providing the ground for continued and unrelenting critique and resistance of repressive social forces. In this reading, the paradigmatic shift which we argued occurs between the paradigm of subjugation and the paradigm of self-constitution represents a clear break on a logical level but also a

continuity on a normative level. The value of freedom converts to political action and it is this which makes Foucault an unrelenting champion   of liberty, tolerance and individuality.

NOTES

1.   Interpretations by Remo Bodei (1986) Christian Jambet (1989) and Guy Laforest (1989) focus on the subject in Foucault but make no distinction between these two different notions of subject and hence stop short of assessing   the structure of Foucault's genealogy of power and aesthetic of existence.

2.   Indeed, Masterman (1980) claims to have found 21 usages of paradigm in this very work and suggests that they fall into three distinct categories of metaphysical, sociological and artefact paradigms.

3.   As we know, Kuhn's (1970) objective was to provide a more global view of the history of scientific practice, including interrelations between members of the scientific community, than any one of these dimensions is able to account for.   We also know how his demonstration of a tension between sociological and social psychological elements, on the one hand, and logical and epistemological elements, on the other, created an uproar within the scientific community for not only did it challenge the view that science evolves by exclusively logical and epistemological mediations but that an intense power struggle between advocates of conflicting logics and epistemologies propels scientific practice.

4.   Amongst those who argue against a theory of power in Foucault are   Jana Sawicki (1988) and Lawrence Olivier (1988).

5.   Taylor (1986) makes a convincing case for an implicit authentic subjectivity in Foucault, inspite of Foucault's contentions to the contrary, which accounts for the critique of subjugation as that which foists illusions, disguises, masks and perpetrates falsehoods.

6.   Roberto Miguelez (1992) has theorized conflictual interaction as perpetual creativity in that the actor continuously invents new strategies in order to avoid predictability from the point of view of the adversary and thus to prevail over him.

REFERENCES

Bodei, Remo. 1986. "Pouvoir, politique et maîtrise de soi."*Critique*   no. 471-472, (August-September 1986): 898-917.

Dews, Peter. 1987. *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory.* London: Verso.

Dreyfus, L. Hubert, and Paul Rabinow. 1982.*Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Ferry, Luc, and Alain Renaut. 1985. *La Pensée 68: Essai sur l'anti-humanisme contemporain.* Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel. 1961. *Folie et Déraison.* Paris: Plon.

Foucault, Michel. 1963. *Naissance de la clinique,* Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

Foucault, Michel. 1965. *Madness and Civilization,* trans. R. Howard. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 1966. *Les mots et les choses.* Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel, 1969. *L'archéologie du savoir.* Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel. 1970. *The Order of Things,* trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Random House.

Foucault, Michel. 1971a. *L'ordre du discours.* Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel. 1971b. "Nietzsche, généalogie, histoire." *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite.* Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

Foucault, Michel. 1972a. *Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique* Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel. 1972b. "The Discourse on Language," trans. R. Swyer.*The Archaeology of Knowledge,* trans. A.M.S. Smith. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 1972c. *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* trans. A.M.S. Smith. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 1973. *The Birth of the Clinic,* trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage.

Foucault, Michel. 1975. *Surveiller et punir.* Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *Histoire de la sexualité 1: La volonté de savoir,* Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel. 1977a. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,*trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 1977b. "Les rapports de pouvoir passent à l'intérieur des corps." *Quinzaine Littéraire,* no. 247 (January): 1-15.

Foucault, Michel. 1977c. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History."*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault,* ed. D. F. Bouchard and trans. D. F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1979. *The History of Sexuality I: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley. New York: Random House.

Foucault, Michel. 1980a. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon and trans. C. Gordon *et al.* New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 1980b. "Two Lectures". in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon and trans. C. Gordon *et al.* New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 1980c. "Truth and Power." *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon and trans. C. Gordon *et al.* New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 1980d. "The History of Sexuality." *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon and trans. C. Gordon *et al.* New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 1982. "The Subject and Power." *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1983. "On the Genealogy of Ethics." *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1984a. "What is Enlightenment?" *Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, Michel. 1984b. *Histoire de la sexualité 2: L'usage des plaisirs* Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel. 1984c. *Histoire de la sexualité 3: Le souci de soi* Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel. 1985. *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. R. Hurley. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 1988a. *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*, ed. L.D. Kritzan, trans. A. Sheridan *et al.* New York: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel. 1988b. *The Care of the Self* trans. R. Hurley. New York: Vintage Books.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1987a. "The Critique of Reason as an Unmasking of the Human Sciences: Michel Foucault." *The Philosophical Discourses of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1987b. "Some Questions Concerning the Theory of Power: Foucault Again." *The Philosophical Discourses of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press.

Hadot, Pierre. 1981. *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* Paris: Etudes augustiniennes.

Hadot, Pierre. 1989. " Réflexions sur la notion de 'culture de soi'*Michel Foucault philosophe Michel Foucault, philosophe, Rencontre internationale, Paris, 9, 10, 11, janvier 1988,* Paris: Seuil.

Honneth, A. 1985. *Kritik der Macht.* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

Jambet, Christian. 1989. "Constitution du sujet et pratique spirituelle."*Michel Foucault, philosophe, Rencontre internationale, Paris, 9, 10, 11, janvier 1988* Paris: Seuil.

Kuhn, Thomas, 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Laforest, Guy. 1989. "Gouverne et liberté: Foucault et la question du pouvoir." *Canadian Journal of Political Science,* no. 3, (September): 547-562.

Masterman, Margaret. 1970. "The Nature of a Paradigm."*Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge,* eds. I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave. London: Cambridge University Press: 59-89.

Miguelez, Roberto. 1992. "Machiavel et la rationalité du politique." *Carrefour* no. 14 -2: 5-27.

Olivier, Lawrence. 1988. "La question du pouvoir chez Foucault: espace, stratégie et dispositif." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* no. 21, (March): 83-98.

Rochlitz, Rainer. 1989. "Esthétique de l'existence." *Michel Foucault, philosophe, Rencontre internationale, Paris, 9, 10, 11, janvier 1988* Paris: Seuil.

Sawicki, Jana. 1988. "Feminism and the Power of Foucauldian Discourse."*After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge, Postmodern Challenge* ed. Jonathan Arac. London: Rutgers University Press.

Taylor, Charles. 1986. "Foucault on Freedom and Truth."*Foucault : A Critical Reader,* ed. David Couzens Hoy. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Thiele, Leslie Paul. 1990. "The Agony of Politics: The Nietzschean Roots of Foucault's Thought." *American Political Science Review* 84: 907-925.

Wolin, Sheldon. 1988. "Theory and Practice of Power."*After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge, Postmodern Challenge,*ed. Jonathan Arac. London: Rutgers University Press.